

Ljubljana 11th – 12th March 2009

Mission Report

The Slovenian Intellectual Property Office (SIPO) and the University of Ljubljana (UL) are working together well on the project and the overall impression is that good progress is being made. SIPO and the UL Rector's building are within close walking distance of each other, which is an advantage. SIPO is committed to providing resource to support the project and UL already has in place systems, processes and resources to enable technology transfer to take place. The support from SIPO is readily available, and Mr Macek is enthusiastic and well experienced. The Technology Transfer Office in UL was started in 2007 and is already making good progress.

There is a clear legislative framework for intellectual property management in place in Slovenia and this is well understood by those involved at UL. This is extremely important and should not be overlooked as important aspect of the environment in which the HO operates. There is however one aspect of the framework that was identified as being less streamlined than others; this relates to setting up spin-out companies. Under the current framework UL is required (as a state owned organisation) to obtain government permission to become involved in setting-up a new spin-out company. This involves the relevant government departments in a considerable amount of work that they may not be that experienced in providing. It may be preferable for government to devolve its decision making responsibilities in this area to the University itself, within the responsibilities of the Rector's Office.

Within UL, there are a number of people involved in technology transfer activities. Professor Dr Peter Macek, Vice-rector is the senior member of the University promoting technology transfer activities with the University and he is well supported by Helena Valas and Karmen Marolt. Professor Macek was instrumental in establishing the HO in 2007. During the visit those involved in technology transfer commented how beneficial and helpful the support from SIPO is.

Helena Valas reported that a new technology licensing deal is to be concluded the week following the visit with a Slovenian life sciences company. The Professor who is involved in the development of the technology being licensed has connections to the licensee company; this highlights the role that researchers can play in identifying and supporting licensing deals.

The Lecture to researchers, university officers and SIPO representatives was reasonably well attended and highlighted two relevant general points, which are connected. First, the University is a collection of faculties geographically dispersed across the city of Ljubljana. Transport to the central university building, the Rector's Building, where the Lecture was held and the HO has its offices, adds additional time and effort for researchers in the faculties. Therefore centrally organised events need substantial promotion across the University. Second, at this early stage in its development the HO is now well placed to start a programme of activities to promote itself more widely across the University, involving travelling out to meet the researchers in the faculties.

There is an opportunity for the HO to raise its awareness amongst researchers and to offer to engage with researchers in a wide range of ways (seminars, lectures, work-shops, talks, coffee- mornings etc.). The optimum way to manage these activities is for the HO to offer a wide range of options to the heads of research groups, heads of departments and heads of faculties and then to provide the sort of event that fits those researchers at that time. There is no 'one size fits all' approach to this sort of internal marketing activity. It is often said that technology transfer is first and foremost a people activity, and getting out to meet the people is important. In addition to events, the HO has an opportunity to follow-up with a stronger web presence and to prepare additional leaflets and marketing materials.

There is a useful framework within which to view the development of technology transfer activities: "Leadership, Stories, and Resources". Leadership: Professor Macek is providing very enthusiastic leadership on technology transfer within the University. It would be advantageous for this role to be spread across to other senior colleagues so that Professor Macek is not a lone voice. When researchers hear enthusiastic support from research leaders they are more likely to engage in technology transfer activities with the HO. Stories: A good way of enthusing researchers is by telling stories of the success of

the HO in helping researchers transfer technology, create impact with their research and generate income. The anticipated licensing deal provides an ideal opportunity to tell a great story about technology transfer success. Resources: With leadership and good stories it often becomes less challenging to secure resources to support and grow technology transfer activities.

There are a number of activities within the TTO which are up and running, with good levels of understanding of the issues involved. For example, there is a clear approach to measuring activity and outputs, which is good. The following key indicators are tracked: Disclosures, Patent Applications, Deals. Given the relatively early stage of development of the TTO in ULK, there are of course areas which can be developed further. This will always be the case. For example, there is an opportunity to develop the approach and activities that are used in marketing the technologies that available for licensing. Whilst it is useful to start with inputs from the researchers involved in developing the technologies, it is almost always beneficial to use this as a starting point only. The no can use its expertise in presenting the technology in terms of benefits to the marketplace, usually moving beyond the technical features described. With a well presented Technology Profile, there is then an opportunity to distribute this widely amongst business contacts, and to place the information on the HO website under the 'technologies available for licensing section'.

Mission Recommendations & Gap report

It is clear from the visit that relations between the SIPO and those involved in technology transfer at UL are strong and working well. The HO is established and needs further encouragement and resource to grow.

It is important that everyone involved in the current activities helps to ensure that the current levels of support within the University for the Technology Transfer Office continue and grow. SIPO has a role to play here should there be any sense that the support for the no within the University is not as strong as it could be. The no has started effectively with clear leadership support from Professor Macek.

The no can now develop a range of internal marketing activities to promote awareness of its services and expertise. There is also scope to develop external marketing activities through use of promotional material and developing business networks.

The University has an opportunity to engage in discussions with Government over improving the processes for approving the formation of new spin-out opportunities. This is important so that University researchers are not discouraged from using the official channels for establishing new businesses and they and the University together can help grow the companies and share the benefits.

The ideal methodology for the gap report is to use an assessment of the level, stage and development of activities in relation to the areas identified in Isis Innovation's Elements Programme. The Elements Programme identifies the categories under which one can assess all the required and desired aspects of a technology transfer environment. It is a generic tool that is applicable

Transferring technologies out from the university research base to business is complicated and difficult. It requires a large number of elements for it to be possible at all. Some of the elements are essential, some are 'nice to have'; some can be put in place relatively quickly, others take years to implement. Some are more important at the early stages of developing a technology transfer capability, others may only become significant after a few years. The elements are described in three groups: those internal to the University; those required in the business environment (local for spin-outs, international for licensing and consulting); those that are the responsibility of government.

The visit did not provide the opportunity to use the Elements Programme in a detailed way. Nevertheless the elements identified in the programme provide a useful guide to those areas which should be considered over time.

Based upon the visit and with full awareness of the early stage of the activity, the following comments are most relevant:

- A.1 The support and enthusiasm from Professor Macek is impressive and valuable. It is important that this enthusiasm and support are spread amongst other senior members of the University.
- A.3 There is scope for the current legislative arrangements for spin-outs between the University and relevant government Departments to be improved.
- A.6 The TTO is still in its early stages and has achieved much in a relatively short time. Given the dispersed locations of the University researchers, the TTO can now find ways to spend more time amongst researchers in their faculties; to raise awareness, and to increase numbers of disclosures.

- B.5 There is always scope to increase the network of companies which the TTO believes are interested in licensing in new technologies; both in Slovenia and internationally.
- B.6 There may be an opportunity to accelerate developing the business and industry network by working with local professional services firms who will have contacts with technology industries (B.5).

ISIS ELEMENTS PROGRAMME

A. UNIVERSITY

- 1. Supportive Vice-Chancellor, Rector, Provost
 - i. & Senior Researchers
- 2. Research Activity
 - i. High volume & quality
- 3. University IP Policy
 - i. Ownership
 - ii. Revenue sharing
 - iii. Disputes
- 4. Research Services Office
 - i. Manage relationship with Research funders
- 5. Access to Proof of Concept / Seed funds
- 6. Technology Transfer Office

B. BUSINESS

- 1. Business Angels
- 2. Seed & Venture Capital
- 3. Entrepreneurs
- 4. Professional Advisers
 - i. Banks
 - ii. Accountants
 - iii. Lawyers
 - iv. Property
- 5. Innovative Technology companies
 - i. As Licensees
- 6. Business Networks

C. GOVERNMENT

- 1. Tax incentives
 - i. SME Benefits
 - ii. CGT & Income Tax
 - iii. Tax credits & Tax relief
- 2. Grant programmes
 - i. Technology Transfer
 - ii. Businesses
- 3. Public procurement
- 4. Support, Clarity, Consistency

(Excerpt from a report by Tom Hockaday, Managing Director of ISIS Innovation Ltd., the technology transfer company of the University of Oxford on the visit at the TTO of the University of Ljubljana and the Slovenian Intellectual Property Office on 11 and 12 March 2009)